

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Concepto Verding: New Spanish brand of fair trade, organic underwear

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Name: Concepto Verding S.L.
City, country: Barcelona
Name of entrepreneur/ founder: Alberto Fernandez, Yazmin Garcia

Description: Online shop for affordable green products with a new line of organic underwear distributed through more than 15 shops in Spain. In addition environmental marketing consultancy services offered. Overall aim to make contributing to the environment more accessible.

Investment:
Start up capital: Contributions from the founders and bank loans
Rate of return on investment: Not applicable
Sources of funding: Current income from the sale of the new line of underwear, online shop sales and a consultancy services.

Stakeholders: Triodos Bank (gave advice not funding), friends who helped to test the products, consumer groups

Employment generation: 3 full times, 9 contracted externally for specific services.

Timeline:
2003: initial idea
2008: founded the business
2009: opened the website
2010: presented the new line of organic underwear at the German fair Biofach

Feasibility study: Research on individual organic habits/consumption undertaken for several years, consumer groups were held to test the products and concepts, products were also tested on family and friends, research carried out with German, French and UK businesses producing underwear as well as organic clothing companies. A niche market for organic underwear was discovered through this process and an analysis made of the competition as well as suppliers.

Geo-social-economic setting: The niche market for organic underwear in the first phase is in Germany and Nordic countries, the online web has a local (Spain) market. The decision was made to target the online shop at Spanish consumers where a niche for affordable green products has been identified, given the current economic climate in Spain this was considered important.

Key features: Affordability and strong environmental criteria, backed up by certifications and standards of the highest level.

Overall rational and motivation:	A personal motivation to leave a positive impact in society, after many years working in advertising for multinationals. There is also a specific environmental driver to reduce the impact of the business, maintaining a close relationship with all suppliers, encouraging them to also certify themselves with relevant environmental criteria. Suppliers include producers of organic cotton from Greece, textile production with a company in Alicante, dyes in Barcelona, manufacturing in Barcelona and Malaga.
Strengths:	Understanding of the organic market, with clear understanding of the characteristics of consumers of these products, good relationship with suppliers, environmental characteristics of the products, clear vision and overall commitment. The first company in Spain to be certified with the GOTS standard (Global Organic Textile Standard).
Challenges and constraints:	Financial resources to grow and ability to convince suppliers to acquire environmental certification and encouraging them to see the long term business advantage of investing in their own environmental credibility.
Direct activities and Impacts:	<i>Social:</i> 3 full time jobs, and 9 subcontractors, Fair Trade Labeled products, material cut offs are donated to an NGO in Girona working with individuals with learning difficulties. Long term relationships are established with suppliers, supporting those developing social benefits for their workers. <i>Environmental:</i> Use of recycled material for packaging, organic cotton for underwear line, first GOT certified business in Spain. Suppliers are encouraged to adopt organic certification or other environmental standards. <i>Economic:</i> Working only with Spanish supplies in very bad economic situation due to the fashion/textile business working process moved to cheaper countries.
Use of innovative Technologies:	Use of web 2.0 to stimulate interaction with clients. Research and development in how to reduce the environmental footprint of production, including looking at how to incorporate natural materials into the zips and other clothing accessories to avoid the use of polyamide. Constant research into how to improve organic clothing in terms of colour, resistance and health.
Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:	Both founders received training through the Triform Institute and follow a philosophy of Anthroposophy in the business, where there is no individual visionary, rather everyone is involved and committed.
:JHSLVMILUIZ!	Organic underwear line on sale in more than 15 shops in Spain.
Policies, incentives and regulations needed:	The government should give free reign, and not interfere in this kind of business. More conscious consumers who really stop to think before they buy would help the business grow.
Lessons and recommendations:	Do things you really believe in and get to know your market really well before starting.
References: www.conceptoverding.com www.verding.es	